

PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS

IN CHARGE OF
LUCY L. DROWN

THE KINDERGARTEN HOUR

By MARY ISABEL HAMILTON

To the outsider, the name "Surgical Ward" would hardly suggest at any time the possibility of an atmosphere of happiness, more particularly when the ward is filled with small children. Yet one has only to peep into Ward O, in the City Hospital of Boston, any afternoon between three and four o'clock to see the delight expressed in the countenance of each little sufferer, for it is Kindergarten time, and that means an occupation of some sort, varied for each day. First comes a story, which, when completed, is generally followed by "Oh, please, now, do tell us another;" then a song or two suitable to the season, the children enjoying very much the ones about Santa Claus, Jack Frost, and never tiring of Miss Poulsson's finger-play game of

"Here's a ball for baby,
Big and soft and round."

After the singing comes our work, which consists of sewing of cards in bright-colored worsted; sometimes the design is outlined, and, again, the children invent their own patterns; the weaving of mats, through which the children learn color, number, and form; the folding of paper into life and geometrical forms; the painting of fruits, varied by the children's own creations, formed by combinations of geometrical figures drawn by children and then painted; drawing, peas-work, and cutting. In all of these occupations the child is at times given free scope to use his own ideas, while at others he is told what to do. Each child's work when completed is marked with his own name and saved, so that when he goes home he takes his finished work with him. For the tiny tots not able to handle this material there are beads of all colors to string, which gives them much pleasure; also square boards are supplied filled with holes, into which the child puts brightly colored pegs. All this diversion takes the child's mind from himself, furnishes employment for

the restless little fingers, and gives him something pleasant to look forward to.

It is indeed a great satisfaction for one in the work to feel upon the arrival of the elevator that all the children able to be about, either on crutches or in wheel-chairs, will be waiting for the teacher, and as she steps forth she is greeted with sparkling eyes and a slap of the hands, thus: "Oh, here you are!" "What are we going to do to-day?" "Sewing?" "Oh, I just *love* sewing. I wish the bell would ring for the visitors to go, so we could begin." One day little M., suffering with a broken leg, said, "Please let us go right to work, for I'm going to have my dressing done, and I'm afraid if you don't hurry up the doctor will be here, and then I can't do my Kindergarten work." As she finished speaking, the doctor made his appearance. The child's face fell. I quickly prepared a sewing-card and gave it to her. She was wheeled away to the next room, from which issued not a sound. After a time she returned jubilant and remarked, "You didn't hear me scream, did you? I just worked all the time on my card, and the doctor said it was better than chloroform for me." Nothing seems too hard or troublesome for them, and they work with a will. Generally it is said, "May I do another when I finish this?" One day when this request was made I said, "Time is up, and I must be going." "Oh, dear, it just seems like five minutes since you came." "Yes," I said, "doesn't the time fly?" to which remark a small voice piped up from the bed in the corner and said, "It does when we do Kindergarten work, but if you had to lie here all day doing nothing you'd think it was awful long."

What is done in the hospital can hardly be termed "Kindergarten work," as it is simply an adaptation of some of the Kindergarten occupations to meet the needs and requirements of the children. Of course, very little development can be noticed, as the children remain so short a time except in some few instances.

Too much cannot be said in praise of the one who originated this hour of recreation for the little ones, for it is indeed a great work, and our hope is that it may always continue.

